



connections

Equality of Opportunity and Freedom from Discrimination

Complaint Resolution Results in Training & Understanding



Meet Scott. He has earned his Red Double Stripe belt in Taekwondo. He is interested in computer science, complex patterns, algorithms, and psychology. He wants to study quantum physics and design computer programs that will help people living with disabilities. He has become the "go to man" when there are computer problems at his workplace. He is so much more than the Asperger's Syndrome or High Functioning Autism diagnosis he received when he was 10 years old.

From Scott and his mother Lori's experience, neurotypical people often put those with Asperger's or Autism diagnosis into a box with people who have intellectual disabilities and incorrectly assume that they are only capable of functioning at a low level. Their message to employers is,

"Take the time to learn how to support someone with a diagnosis of Asperger's or Autism in the workplace, and then capitalize on the strengths that they bring to the table."

After a customer complaint which related to challenges Scott has with social communication with people at work, Scott was demoted to a position that had less hours and less pay. He believed his employer made assumptions about what he could do and could not do on the job.

Scott filed a human rights complaint against his employer. The complaint was investigated and there appeared to be evidence to support that the employer knew that Scott had special needs relating to his disability, but failed to provide him with the supports necessary to allow him to be successful at work. The Commission decided to request that an independent adjudicator be appointed to make a final decision about the complaint.

Scott says that he takes things very literally, and has a hard time understanding nuances, facial expressions, or sarcasm. As he matures, he's learning much more about himself and how he relates

The Rights Connection

Communitites in Action

By Isha Khan – Executive Director

This last month it seems the public was particularly focused on human rights.

The tragic events in Orlando, Florida spurred communities across North America to acknowledge the discrimination, ignorance and hatred towards the LGBTTQ* community, Muslims and people of colour. On the other hand, these communities also gathered in solidarity to look at how far we have come as a society and recognize that there is still work to do to ensure we are all given equality of opportunity and are free from discrimination. Closer to home, Steinbach will join other Manitoba communities by hosting the first-ever Pride parade in that community.

In addition, more than 200, people including residential school survivors and their families, Indigenous leadership, Honourary Witnesses of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC's), academics, policy makers, media, and youth gathered at the University of Winnipeg for the three day *Pathways to Reconciliation* conference. The conference has given those of us who attended on behalf of the Commission much to think about in terms of our role in the reconciliation process, how to implement the TRC's Calls to Action and more than that, what we can do practically to fully implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Persons.

The Commission thanks the organizers of these Manitoba initiatives that bring us together as a community.

David Arnot, CASHRA & Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission; Isha Khan, MHRC; Celeste McKay, Canadian Human Rights Commission; Craig Benjamin, Amnesty International Canada; Will David, Assembly of First Nations; David Langtry, Canadian Human Rights Commission



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differently to people. In order for him to succeed he needs clear, precise communication. For example, "clean the shelves" is not helpful. There are so many ways for that to be done. Better directions for someone with Asperger's or Autism would be: "Take everything off these shelves; dust the shelves, put everything back on the shelves in an organized way."

Scott said that being "put in a box" at work and being demoted made him want to just give up and accept what other people thought about him, rather than challenge them. He's learned that, "people's opinion about you does not have to become your reality."

It was a good day when he received the human rights investigation report because it validated what had happened to him. His human rights complaint was withdrawn before it went to a public adjudication because he and his employer were able to reach a resolution. As part of the resolution, his employer agreed to make systemic changes such as providing training to its staff about Autism Spectrum Disorders and to review its accommodation and return to work policies and practices.

Continue the conversation. Learn more about the benefits of hiring and retaining employees with Autism Spectrum Disorder.



Tammy Ballingall and Shelley Cords from Alexander School were invited to share their successful Anti-Bullying/Harassment campaign with the Brandon School Division Trustees. If your school is doing something awesome to create a safe, respectful, and inclusive environment - let us know!

Commission Staff Reflect on Pathways to Reconciliation Conference

— by Will Steinburg, Investigator

The *Pathways to Reconciliation* conference, held June 15 -18, marked the first anniversary of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission closing. Over 400 people, including 80 speakers, attended this conference which explored understandings of reconciliation and ways to implement and monitor reconciliation initiatives.

The conference offered a variety of discussions and activities, focusing on the work done to date and steps to be taken towards reconciliation. Panel discussions featured experts in law, history, arts, governance, as well as community leaders and survivors. Indigenous and non-Indigenous speakers covered topics such as remembrance and education, international examples of reconciliation, the role of churches and government, human rights and rights of indigenous people, preserving indigenous cultures, and engaging newcomers.

Commission staff each identified a different seminar as a personal highlight. Kelby found the session "Reconciliation Barometer" especially interesting. In this session speakers discussed the difficulty in measuring reconciliation with colonialist tools and systems of measurement.

The interactive "Blanket Exercise Workshop" led Will and other participants through 500 years of relations between indigenous peoples and settlers. A huge blanket, representing the landmass of Canada was gradually folded back into tiny squares representing reserves. Participants had to leave the blanket because of disease and assimilation efforts, until only a few remained, representing the resilience of indigenous people.

Beatrice noted that the "Reconciliation and Cultural Differences" session became an example of cross cultural conversation when an Indigenous participant spoke up, rejecting the non-Indigenous panelist's ideas about reconciliation being a form of colonialism new guise.

Paul especially enjoyed an informal discussion after the "Churches as Reconcilers" session in which an Indigenous woman emphasized the importance of spirituality in all aspects of life, rather than religious services only.

The conference was a positive, profound, and also difficult experience. Each staff member said they came away with many new and unexpected insights.